



***The Scarlet Letter* essay**

Essay Requirements:

- 1) Final draft due September 24th. Late essays will lose 5 points per day.
- 2) Must be two to three typed, double spaced pages.
- 3) Must follow all standard essay conventions – You will lose points if you fail to do this correctly.

4) A well-planned introduction that effectively leads into your thesis statement and a meaningful conclusion that restates your thesis and connects the importance of your point to a broader issue.

5) Three to five body paragraphs that are all directly connected to your thesis argument. Each paragraph should begin with a topic sentence. Each paragraph should also have at least two examples that support the topic sentence and the thesis.

6) A works cited page at the end with all the sources used. Remember, you may use other sources for research and ideas – these can be particularly helpful in your introductions and conclusions. If you ask me, I will search for scholarly articles based on the topics you choose and help you find them.

TOPICS:

1. Discuss Hawthorne's comment on a social issue. How does *The Scarlet Letter* portray, question, challenge, support...

*The role of women, feminism and gender roles. Are Hester's actions and life a symbol for women in general, or do they simply represent one woman's story? What point does he seem to be making?

*The concepts of justice, mercy and vengeance. How are these three ideas (or just one or two of them) intertwined and present throughout the novel? What is Hawthorne's message or point about them?

*The role and effect of organized religion. How is religion problematic or beneficial in the Puritan community? What is the result of a culture dominated by religious leaders? What characters are useful in this argument?

2. Trace and analyze the role of nature throughout the novel. Focus on a specific part of nature – the forest or a plant – or on the larger motif as it relates to Romanticism. Analyze and consider how and why Hawthorne uses nature and what its role is. If you would like, you can choose two settings (one of which relates to nature – like town and forest) and analyze their role in the novel.

3. Analyze a character, a pair of characters, or a set of characters. Choose any character(s), and perform a deep analysis of their role or purpose in the novel; be sure to support your analysis through a discussion of at least three specific scenes. Consider characters and their possible foil as well.

4. Topic of your choice. (You must submit proposed idea by Tuesday, September 16th) Some possible topics: magic in *The Scarlet Letter* or in Pearl, compare Chillingworth to another literary character, any of the themes: revenge, sin, forgiveness, hypocrisy, isolation, , etc.

Keep *How to Read Like A Professor* in mind!